

ordered life of the Franciscan or Dominican convent outside the city walls. Once he had taken the vows, the novice was caught, and a temporary convenience became a life-long bond. The seculars regarded this practice as poaching, the more so as it brought Oxford into such discredit with parents who did not wish their sons to become friars, that the number of undergraduates was said to fall off in consequence. The hatred of the two sections was further increased by professional jealousy, which was augmented when the spiritual Franciscans declared for evangelical poverty and denounced the possessions of the Church. This jealousy was as strong in Oxford as in the rest of England. The monks and friars detested each other only one degree less than they both detested the seculars.¹

Into this embroilment of old hatreds and rivalries Wycliffe's doctrines were thrown as a fresh element of discord. At first, as we have seen, his attack on Church property brought him into alliance with at least a section of the Oxford friars. By attacking the prelates and the Church generally, he seems to have won the favour of all parties at Oxford, especially at the time of his trial in 1378. But in the next two or three years his quarrel with the regular orders came to a head. When his doctrine on the Eucharist appeared, the friars and monks, the orthodox theologians of the place, united with the Chancellor Berton and a few seculars to condemn the thesis. A University officer was sent into Wycliffe's lecture-room to enjoin silence upon him. There he was found, propounding to his audience the impossibility of accidents without substance, and of the other metaphysical absurdities which he alleged against Transubstantiation. He appeared to be a little taken aback at the decree, but replied that it could not shake his opinion.²

He was equally firm when John of Gaunt hurried down to Oxford to prevent him from, ruining a fine political career by an insane love of truth. As he did not wear the livery of the House of Lancaster, and had quite other plans in his head than were dreamt of by his patron, he refused to be silent on the forbidden topic.³ The alliance of the two men came to an end after this critical interview, for the Duke was as orthodox

¹ See Ap.* *ffasc. #.*, 110-3.³ *Ibid*, 114.